4. ORDEAL

695 In cases where decisions were difficult, and where the judges were not able to detect the guilt of the suspect, they resorted to the ordeal, which had, in the eyes of the people, the meaning of God's judgment, since they believed that "by the issue of the ordeal the gods themselves were held to show on which side the right was."[38]

The ordeals used by the Georgian Highlanders were the same as those in universal practice in the ancient Georgian legislation, when the people were governed by custom, and which were later included in the famous Georgian Code of King Vakhtang VI.

Prince Vakhusht relates in his work that in order to find out who was the guilty party suspected in a theft, boiling water and a hot iron were used in Georgia.[39]

The ordeals which were practiced by the Georgians were: (1) the water ordeal, (2) the hot iron ordeal, and (3) the boiling water ordeal.

The water ordeal consisted of the following procedure: The suspected criminal or criminals, together with their accuser, were led to the bank of a river. Their hands and feet were then tied with cords, and in this condition they were thrown into the river. The person whose body remained on the surface of the water was regarded as the guilty one, and was consequently punished. The people believed that the body of a culprit was always rejected by the river, and that the innocent one was kept by the water. Consequently, the person whose body remained under water was considered innocent.

791 695 754 Nobody in Megrelia doubts the existence of sorcerers and witches, and because of this belief there have been cases of a highly dramatic nature. For example, after the Turkish War, in the villages near the town of Zugdidi, the epizooty broke out. This phenomenon was ascribed by the people to the action of witches, and in order to find out who they were, a Turk from the neighboring Georgian province of Samursakan was called. The

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[38] Hartland: 175.
[39] Vakhusht: 6-7.

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1

Turk was famous for his ability to discern witches. Arriving at the village, the Turk ordered all the old women of the village to be called together and thrown into the river. Those who sank were cleared of suspicion, but those who did not were pronounced witches. A few unfortunate women who were kept afloat, perhaps by their clothes, were pronounced guilty of the practice of witchcraft and responsible for the calamity.[40]

During the procedure of the hot iron ordeal, as practiced by the Georgians, an iron shred from a plow was heated until it was as red as burning coal; then it was placed on an elevated place in such a manner that it would be easy for a man to put his hands under it. Paper was put on the hands of the suspect, and he was obliged to take the iron with his hands, take three steps, and then throw it away. After this his hands were immediately bandaged and kept so for three days, after which time the bandages were removed. If his hands were not burned, the suspect was liberated; if they were, he was regarded as guilty and was therefore punished.

In the execution of the hot water ordeal, a boiler or big pot of boiling water was used. Into this was thrown a piece of iron, usually a horseshoe, which, with the introduction of Christianity, was changed to a small iron cross. The suspect was obliged to take the piece of iron out of the boiling water with his bare hand. After this the procedure was the same as in the hot iron ordeal; that is, the hand was wrapped and kept so for three days, after which the bandages were removed. If the hand showed no marks of burns, the suspect was pronounced innocent; otherwise, he was punished as guilty of the crime.

The ordeals practiced by the Tushes were the use of boiling water and hot iron. Here is a case known to me, in which boiling water was used. In a mill a number of women were suspected of having stolen a sack of flour. In order to detect the thief, it was decided to boil some water and put a horseshoe in it; the woman who burned her hand in taking it out would be adjudged guilty. Only one, by the name of Jabiani, proved to be uninjured after the test, and she was consequently acquitted. The rest of the women

[40] Borozdin: 34.

C. G. 776 thunder), often identified with Christian saints (e.g. the god of thunder with St. Elias or St. George); patrons of agriculture, of cattle breeding, of horsemen, of thieves, etc.; and also a large array of spirits, angels, witches, and wood-giants; and finally a variety of superstitions, of which may be mentioned C. G. [754] the fear of the "evil eye."

C G [778] The religious worship of the Georgian mountain tribes has reverted to their ancient tribal religion, veiled by Christian terminology. Their places of worship, called khat'i "icon" or dzhvari "cross," are small huts of rough stones, mostly standing in sacred groves. Their only adornment are pieces of cloth or horns of the Caucasian capricorn as votive offerings. The same words denote also the supernatural power residing in these huts; it is conceived as a sort of mediator between mankind and the supreme god called Morige "he who allots, distributes." Each village and each clan have their khati, and each tribe, too, had a common khat'i; e.g., that of the Pshav is called Lashris dzhvari, that of the Mtiul Lomisas dzhvari. Every member of the clan considers himself a "serf" (q'ma) of the khat'i, which may send him success, or disease and death. Each khat'i possessed pastures, arable land and woods where it was C. G. 793 forbidden to fell a single tree. Attached to it was a body of functionaries who were appointed temporarily or held their office by